

Lesson 8

READ THIS STORY #1, Advanced

Land Mines

Every year, hundreds of people are victims of land mines. Looking for land mines and removing them is tedious, dangerous and expensive.

Metal detectors are used to sweep over abandoned battlefields where the presence of mines is suspected. Scores of false alarms occur for every actual mine that is detected. Every alarm must be investigated. But in the future, we may use a different method—bees.

Unearthed landmines give off a vapor. Molecules of that vapor attach to the fuzz of bees foraging for food. By putting sensors into a beehive, scientists can tell if a bee has brought back traces of an explosive.

Plans are afoot to develop a tiny tracking antenna that will be glued onto bees. Scientists will then use sugar water as food to lure bees to places suspected of having landmines. The antenna will track their flight. Then when the bees return, the sensors will pick up any trace of explosives.

Scientists are hopeful that these innovations will speed up the detection and removal of unexploded landmines.